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CHILEAN ELECTIONS

With Fidel Castro now on record--in a 1 August interview with a visiting Chilean delegation--as endorsing the Chilean electoral path to socialism, Cuban media have given predictably heavy play to the plurality won by leftist candidate Salvador Allende in the 4 September Chilean election. Welcoming the outcome in commentaries and airing interviews with Allende, Havana at the same time evinces concern over alleged rightist machinations to deprive Allende of his victory. To win the presidency, he must be chosen over conservative candidate Jorge Alessandri in a vote by the Chilean Congress slated for 24 October.

Moscow has welcomed Allende's victory in a much more moderate volume of comment, emphasizing that it was a product of a broad coalition of leftist forces and generalizing on the effectiveness of the united-front approach. Like Havana, Moscow warns of "reactionary" efforts to deprive Allende of the fruit of his electoral triumph, and like Havana it mentions the possibility of a military coup.

Peking media have not been heard to report the election outcome, although Allende has named the PRC in his listings of communist countries--headed by China and including the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, and North Korea--with which he would seek cordial relations if elected. Chinese media report strikes, protests, and disorders in Latin America from time to time but generally ignore organized political activity in the hemisphere. They did not report or comment on the Chilean election campaign.

CUBAN MEDIA AIR ALLENDE STATEMENT OF CONFIDENCE IN VICTORY

Havana media on 5 September featured interviews with Allende, who commented that in view of the statements of defeated Christian Democratic Party Candidate Radomiro Tomic greeting him as the President-elect, it would be "a political impossibility" for Christian Democratic and rightist congressmen to collaborate to defeat him in next month's balloting. He also expressed confidence that the Chilean armed forces would "respect the people's verdict."

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Allende has had close personal ties with Castro for some time and reiterated, after his electoral victory was announced, his intention to resume diplomatic relations with Cuba and establish relations with other communist regimes. In his 1 August interview with the visiting Chileans,* Castro had expressed his interest "in opening relations with only a few countries, among them Chile," and added that "perhaps in the case of Chile we have the most interest." The Madrid EFE reported under a Santiago dateline on the 5th that Castro sent a congratulatory message to Allende, and REUTERS the next day cited Socialist Party sources as stating that he telephoned Allende to "congratulate him on the electoral victory and extend Cuba's recognition of his election as President of Chile." Havana media have not carried either report as yet.

Despite his avowed admiration for Castro and the Cuban revolution, Allende has emphasized in public statements that Chile's path to socialism would differ from Cuba's. In post-election interviews with Havana media he effusively lauded Cuba but stressed that Chile would pursue its own path: "We who have seen in Cuba an expression of dignity and the struggle to build socialism find it significant to be able to say that in the case of South American today there are also people who will begin to advance along their own path, different from that of Cuba, but with the same goal." Allende also referred obliquely to Castro's endorsement of the Chilean electoral path to socialism, praising "the Cuban people, who have learned that each nation has its own reality and its own path." In a press conference in Santiago on the 5th, duly reported by PIRENA LATINA's correspondent to his home office, Allende affirmed his belief in a multi-party system and his commitment to free elections: "We are going to do something that is ours, authentically ours according to Chile's reality, history, and idiosyncrasy. We are not anybody's parakeet."

In the course of the 1 August interview--parts of which were carried in Cuban media and shown on Chilean TV--Castro had expressed concern over use of the Cuban revolution as an issue

For a discussion of the interview, see the TRENDS of 19 August 1970, pages 36-41.

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by rightists campaigning against Allende. Chilean TV carried remarks in which Castro appeared anxious to counter charges that Allende planned to convert Chile into another Cuba and seemed particularly anxious to reassure the Chilean armed forces:

I believe that conditions are different than those in Cuba. I believe that things cannot be done there as in Cuba. I heard a speech by Allende, and it appears that this was very clear on the different circumstances of the process in Chile and the Cuban process. Truly they would be different. We made a revolution in an open struggle, a guerrilla struggle. . . . and we destroyed the army here. Then our relations with the armed forces were determined by those things. Relations in Chile with military institutions will be determined by other factors.

Allende made a similar point when questioned at his post-election press conference about the possibility of a military coup. In Cuba Castro defeated the armed forces of a dictator, he said, so "it was logical that those armed forces could not continue to exist"; but in Chile "no war" has occurred, and "there is no dispute between the armed forces and the people."

Expressions of Cuban concern over efforts by conservative forces to deprive Allende of the presidency are typified by comments in an 8 September Radio Havana discussion program, in which panelists charged that "Alessandri's spokesmen have been practically encouraging a coup d'etat" and that "a climate of mistrust is being created--a climate of uneasiness in the nation that would prompt a military coup." A radio commentary on the 6th, hailing the election outcome as a major defeat for both the United States and the Chilean "oligarchy," cautioned that "the Yankee imperialists and the Chilean reactionary forces will resort to all means to once more try to evade the people's decision."

Observing that the Chilean Congress in the past has always ratified the victory of the candidate receiving a plurality of the votes, the 6 September commentary declared that "any other course taken on this occasion, when the candidate is of the left, would be a bloody farce." It recalled that the Chilean Socialist Party has called for a general strike if Allende is not chosen.

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MOSCOW HAILS OUTCOME AS PRODUCT OF BROAD UNITED FRONT

Moscow's limited comment welcoming the election outcome is typified by a 7 September TASS commentary which finds in Allende's victory "great implications both for Chile and the entire national liberation movement in Latin America." Moscow has not singled out the role of the Soviet-oriented Chilean CP, picturing the electoral victory rather as an exemplary product of a broad coalition of leftist forces. Thus the TASS commentary stated:

Salvador Allende's success was made possible only by the unity of all democratic and anti-imperialist forces in Chile which acted in a united front for the first time in many years. Of great importance was the establishment of the popular action bloc which included the Communist, Socialist, Radical, and Social Democratic Parties as well as "Independent Popular Action" and the "Movement of United Popular Action."

In a similar vein, a Radio Moscow commentary on the 5th noted that despite efforts by the "agonizing classes" to prevent unification of the left, "the leftwing parties managed to form a wide democratic coalition which has fully justified its name of Popular Unity."

A series of three articles by Ernst Henry which appeared in LITERARY GAZETTE in July had drawn a glowing picture of prospects for a political alliance of leftist forces in a number of capitalist countries, citing Chile as a case in point. In the second article, on 8 July, Henry noted that the Chilean CP had withdrawn from consideration the candidacy of communist poet Pablo Neruda for the sake of leftist unity even though it was "generally acknowledged" that Neruda would have been "the strongest" candidate the left could present. This demonstrated, according to Henry, "how dear" unity is to the communists and "how necessary it is to meet one another halfway and to make reciprocal concessions."

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